The VA Portland Caregiver Support Program held its 5th annual Caregiver Conference – Unsung Heroes – on Friday, November 18 at the Vancouver Campus. For the first time, the conference was live telecasted to both the Bend and Salem Clinics. The day offered Caregivers a chance to interact with one another, learn about PTSD and suicide prevention, and practice self-compassion (see page 4). For those who were unable to attend – WE MISSED YOU! Below are some highlights from the conference. Contact any of the Caregiver Support Staff to learn more!

Keynote Address: Understanding & Supporting Veterans with PTSD
- Dr. Jason Steward, VA Portland Mental Health Department

Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) can have a profound impact on a person’s life, their sense of identity, and their relationships with loved ones and Caregivers. The disorder can make a person feel as if they are inherently a “bad person” or “something that needs to be feared” due to the problems it can create with anger, trust, and one’s ability to communicate. Often people with PTSD walk around with two central beliefs: “Don’t trust anybody” and “It is better to hide what I really think and feel.” This is problematic because it impairs their ability to get the support they genuinely need for what they experienced and helps to create a world where they feel even more isolated and abandoned.

Research shows that if a person has too limited or small of a support network (less than five supportive people in their lives), treatment recovery efforts are less likely to be effective and in some cases are not effective at all. Since most people with PTSD however, are less open about their genuine feelings and needs, they tend to live long histories of having less than their five supportive people out of habit (e.g., pushing people away due to lack of trust). This “lack of five” can greatly impact treatment and often leads to a tremendous level of frustration and failure in both people suffering from PTSD and their Caregivers. Largely this is due to the fact the person may continue “to get worse and worse” despite their best efforts (e.g., numerous medications and therapies tried).

In other words, a seed needs good soil in order for it to grow a healthy plant and a seed cannot grow in concrete. One of the most helpful things a provider and Caregiver can do is encourage and help a person with PTSD generate increased support which also reduces caregiver burnout. Encouraging a person to get better support around them is sometimes all that is needed for a recovery seed to grow more effectively.

We’re taking Dr. Steward’s message to heart! This edition of the Caregiver Quarterly is devoted to resources and ways to help you work to build and sustain your internal and external supports!
Building Inner Strength Through Reflection
by Judy Ulibarri, RN

Reflecting on the magic moments of 2016 with gratitude, we can start with the big milestones and accomplished goals. But then try to look deeper. What were the funny, sweet or significant moments that made up your year? Maybe something in the area of personal growth, such as stress management, or patience? Perhaps you focused on a spiritual practice. A magic moment such as healing a relationship or forgiving someone from your past.

These magic moments probably didn’t happen just by chance. They are everywhere. You can find them in unlikely places like the grocery store, your neighborhood, or even while driving in your car. Magic moments make you feel alive.

I encourage you to take a moment to reflect on a couple of the following questions to realize how amazing, and even sacred, your life has been and what it can be in the upcoming year.

• What was the funniest experience you had? Who did you share it with?
• What made your mouth drop in awe and wonder?
• Who made you smile the most?
• Was there a kind thing a stranger did for you?
• Was there a moment you felt closer to God or your Higher Power?
• What words made your heart feel soft??
• Who gave you the best hug?

By taking the time to reflect on your past year, you will be better able to make meaningful goals for the next. There is no right or wrong way to create a new goal. Be present to who you are and what you need. Your inner Self will guide you how to best care for you this next year.

Savvy Caregiver: A Class for Family Caregivers

Do you care for a family member living with Alzheimer’s or dementia? Savvy Caregiver is a six-week intervention for unpaid caregivers of loved ones with a dementia diagnosis. The class meets for two hours. Topics include:
• Intro to dementia including types of dementia and diagnosis
• Understanding the impact of dementia
• Behavior Management
• Stages of dementia
• Self-care

Upcoming Classes:
West Linn CBOC: Tuesdays 10am-noon; January 24, 31, February 7, 14, 21, 28
Portland VA: Fridays 10am-noon; March 3, 10, 17, 24, April 7
Center for 50+ (Salem, OR): Tuesdays 11am-1pm; April 25, May 2, 9, 16, 23, 30

Contact Kristi Ketchum at (503) 220-8262 ext. 58594 to sign up for an upcoming class!
Greetings Family Caregivers! For those of you who attended our VA Caregiver Conference, this article may serve as a refresher for my presentation on self-compassion. For the Caregivers who were not able to attend our VA Caregiver Conference, this may be an introduction to the topic of self-compassion. At any rate, my hope is to inspire you toward greater self-compassion in your daily lives. I will review the concepts of self-compassion and offer a couple simple self-compassion exercises for you to explore this wonderful topic firsthand.

Why self-compassion? Research shows self-compassion is linked with greater overall well-being and resilience, decreased stress, decreased anxiety and depression, increased ability to cope with life challenges, better performance outcomes, increased healthy habits (such as diet and exercise), and more satisfying personal relationships.

What is self-compassion? Self-compassion entails the three following aspects:

1) Self-kindness: Being supportive and understanding towards ourselves when we are having a hard time or have a need, rather than being harshly self-critical.

2) Connectedness (A sense of common humanity): Remembering that everyone makes mistakes, experiences difficult times and has needs. We are not alone!

3) Mindful attention: Self-compassion involves recognizing when we are stressed or struggling without being judgmental or over-reacting. In other words, self-compassion requires taking a balanced approach to our negative emotions so that feelings are neither suppressed nor exaggerated.

Self-compassion involves listening to and responding to our thoughts, feelings and needs with kindness and gentleness and by choosing healthy behaviors (rather than self-indulgence or self-deprivation). Examples of self-compassion practices include: getting a massage, taking a nap when tired, simply meeting one’s feelings with kindness, taking deep breaths and relaxing your shoulders when stressed, talking to supportive family members or friends, practicing positive self-talk, taking a break/getting respite, exercising, eating healthy foods, practicing meditation, listening to soothing music, and other activities that contribute to our well-being.

Final thoughts: Caregivers need to recharge your batteries so you have enough energy available to give to others. Can you give yourself permission to meet your own needs? Fortunately, attending to your thoughts, feelings and needs will not only enhance your quality of life, it will also enhance your ability to be there for those who rely on you.

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**Simple self-compassion exercise.**
The following exercise can be practiced nearly anywhere and can be completed in one or two minutes. The more you use it, the better it work!

**Loving-Kindness Meditation**

**Step 1:** Sit in a comfortable and relaxed manner.

**Step 2:** Take two or three deep breaths with slow, long and complete exhalations. Let go of any concerns or preoccupations. For a few minutes, feel or imagine the breath moving through the center of your chest – in the area of your heart.

**Step 3:** Sitting quietly, mentally repeat, slowly and steadily, the following or similar phrases:

“May I be happy. May I be well. May I be safe. May I be peaceful and at ease.”

You can also practice other similar phrases, such as:

“May I accept myself as I am in this moment. May I be patient. May I give myself the kindness and compassion that I need.”

*As an aid to the meditation, you might hold an image of yourself in your mind’s eye. This helps reinforce the intentions expressed in the phrases.*

**Step 4:** After a period of directing loving-kindness toward yourself, you can bring to mind a friend or someone in your life who has deeply cared for you. Then slowly repeat phrases of loving-kindness toward them.
Chair Yoga

Chair Extended Side Angle
Utthita Parsvakonasana

https://www.verywell.com/chair-yoga-poses-3567189

Chair Extended Side Angle. Ann Pizer

After your final forward bend, stay folded.

Bring your left fingertips to the floor on the outside of your left foot.

Open your chest as you twist to the right on an inhale, bringing your right arm and gaze up to the ceiling. This is your chair version of extended side angle pose. Hold here for several breaths. Bring the right arm down on an exhale.

If your left hand doesn’t come easily to the floor, place a block under it or bring it to your left knee instead and twist from there.

For a more intense twist, bring the left fingertips to the outside of the right foot (pictured here) before twisting.

Do the same position with the right arm down and the left arm up.

Powerful Tools for Caregivers

Back by popular demand!

Powerful Tools for Caregivers will be offered at VA Portland April 4- May 9, 2017 from 11am-1pm.

In the six weekly classes, Caregivers develop a wealth of self-care tools to: reduce personal stress; change negative self-talk; communicate their needs to family members and healthcare or service providers; communicate more effectively in challenging situations; recognize the messages in their emotions, deal with difficult feelings; and make tough caregiving decisions.

Class participants also receive a copy of The Caregiver Helpbook, developed specifically for the class (from www.powerfultoolsforcaregivers.org).

Classes include:
Class #1: Taking Care of You
Class #2: Identifying and Reducing Personal Stress
Class #3: Communicating Feelings, Needs, and Concerns
Class #4: Communicating in Challenging Situations
Class #5: Learning From Our Emotions
Class #6: Mastering Caregiving Decisions

Please join us to learn to reduce stress, improve self-confidence, better communicate your feelings, increase your ability to make tough decisions and locate helpful resources

Please call Amber Lynch or Leah Christensen at (503) 273.5210 for more information and to enroll.
Oregon Care Partners Offering Free Classes for Caregivers

Oregon Care Partners will be holding many in-person trainings throughout Oregon during this last six months of our funding period, which ends June 30, including the following classes in January. Our goal is to provide trainings to the most caregivers possible during this time. Below is a list of some upcoming classes. For a complete list of classes available in person and online visit https://oregoncarepartners.com/classes/.

January 25, Troutdale -- Understanding Medicines in Older Adults: Care Team Principles
February 7, Gresham -- Living with Alzheimer’s for Caregivers: Middle Stage
February 9, Hillsboro -- Challenging Behaviors: Effective Approaches to Common Behaviors in the Non-dementia Adult Population
February 21, Portland -- Navigating Challenging Behaviors: Strengthening Our Communication Skills as Caregivers

Washington County Disability, Aging and Veterans Services
Find the newest issue of The Advisory--the large-print online publication for older adults, veterans and family caregivers, published six times a year by Washington County Disability, Aging and Veterans Services here: http://www.co.washington.or.us/HHS/DAVS/NewsAndPublications/upload/Advisory_Jan_Feb_2017.pdf

Multnomah County Aging, Disability &Veterans Services
The Multnomah County Family Caregivers Program is offering an array of free classes and workshops. See page 7 for information on upcoming classes on Powerful Tools for Caregivers, Savvy Caregiver and Alzheimer’s Activities Workshops.

“This list of local resources is provided as a courtesy of VAPORHCS. None of these agencies or providers are affiliated with VAPORHCS and VAPORHCS does not endorse or recommend any agency or provider on this list. Nor does this list constitute a referral by VAPORHCS to any of the listed entities. Use of any of these services or providers is at your own risk.”

Please feel free to submit any community resources related to caregiving for future postings! Thank you!

Recipe Corner

Contest-Winning Black Bean Soup Recipe
(from Tasting Table)

3 cans (15 ounces each) black beans, rinsed and drained, divided
3 celery ribs with leaves, chopped
1 large onion, chopped
1 medium sweet red pepper, chopped
1 jalapeno pepper, seeded and chopped
2 tablespoons olive oil
4 garlic cloves, minced
2 cans (14-1/2 ounces each) reduced-sodium chicken broth or vegetable broth
1 can (14-1/2 ounces) diced tomatoes with green peppers and onions, undrained
3 teaspoons ground cumin
1-1/2 teaspoons ground coriander
1 teaspoon Louisiana-style hot sauce
1/4 teaspoon pepper
1 bay leaf
1 teaspoon lime juice
1/2 cup reduced-fat sour cream
1/4 cup chopped green onions

Directions
In a small bowl, mash one can black beans; set aside. In a large saucepan, sauté the celery, onion, red pepper and jalapeno in oil until tender. Add garlic; cook 1 minute longer. Stir in the broth, tomatoes, cumin, coriander, hot sauce, pepper, bay leaf, mashed black beans and remaining whole beans. Bring to a boil. Reduce heat; cover and simmer for 15 minutes. Discard bay leaf. Stir in lime juice. Garnish each serving with 1 tablespoon sour cream and 1-1/2 teaspoons green onion.

Yield: 8 servings (2 quarts).
HELP! I cannot get to the Portland Area
How can I get support?

Our CSP team is committed to offering an array of supports and resources that are accessible by all Caregivers. Often, we hear of the challenges Caregivers face when trying to access some of these offerings or supports in the Portland metro area, so we want to highlight the supports available that do not require travel to Portland. The following is a list of national and local CSP resources that are available to all Caregivers with options to access via phone, Internet or in rural locations (Salem and Vancouver). Please remember CSP staff are here to answer your questions and help connect you to one or more of the many resources available to support you! Call any of the CSP staff or the CSP mainline at (503) 273.5210 to learn more.

Caregiver Support Line 1-855-260-3274: A toll free number for Caregivers to call for supportive counseling, information, education, referral to community local resources and/or Caregiver Support Coordinators.

Caregiver Support Program Drop-In Support Group: 1st & 3rd Mondays of each month from 1-3 providing education and emotional support to Caregivers. Phone line: 1-800-767-1750 access code: 19041#

Supportive Counseling, Linkage to VA & Community Supports: The CSP staff is available to support Family Caregivers by telephone in their role, improving their health and well-being through both practical coaching and emotional support, and to linking Caregivers to VA and community support services.

Wellness Cafe (Salem & Vancouver): Explore a variety of holistic self-care practices that support health and well-being. A self-care practice will be presented at each gathering. Education will be provided regarding the physical, mental, and emotional benefits, with an opportunity to practice and experience each new skill.
4th Wednesday of each month from 1-2pm VA Portland Salem Clinic & 1st Thursday of each month from 10-11am VA Portland Vancouver Campus.


Building Better Caregivers: Building Better Caregivers™ (BBC) is a six-week online interactive workshop for Caregivers who are caring for someone with dementia, memory problems, post-traumatic stress disorder, a serious brain injury, or any other serious injury or illness. BBC offers training in how to provide better care, and it also helps Caregivers learn how to manage their own emotions, stress and physical health.

Peer Support Mentoring Program: The National Peer Support Mentoring Program is a program that matches Caregivers with peer mentors, who can provide personalized support, guidance and friendship, experience and knowledge, and wisdom and skills about thriving as a Caregiver.

REACH VA Program: Caregivers of Veterans with dementia or memory loss are eligible to participate in interactive sessions with the Caregiver Support Program staff. The program is designed to enhance Veterans and Caregivers’ health and well-being. This includes assistance with stress management, information on caregiving and dementia, community resources and coping strategies. This is offered either face-to-face or by telephone.

VA Caregiver Support Program online: Caregiver Support Program website with valuable resources such as: the Caregiver toolbox, including diagnosis care sheets and everyday tips and checklists; Caregiver Connections, resource links, Caregiver Support Line presentations and more. http://www.caregiver.va.gov/
Powerful Tools for Caregivers Support Group

Powerful Tools for Caregivers Support Group is an educational program designed to help family caregivers take care of themselves while caring for a relative or friend.

Class meets for 90 minutes once per week for six weeks.

Dates: Starts Tuesday, March 7, through April 11, 2017. Time: 10 - 11:30 a.m.

Location: Mt. Hood Adult Day Center; 376 NE 219th Ave, Gresham OR 97030

Cost: Free

FREE Care for you loved one while you are in the class will be offered by Mt. Hood Adult Day Center-call Cathy at (971) 400.7030 by February 28, 2017.

To register, or for more information, call Loriann McNeill, Multnomah County Family Caregiver Support Program Coordinator at (503) 988-8210.

Alzheimer’s Activities Workshops

Are you caring for someone with Alzheimer's or another dementia?

Come explore ideas on ways to bring fun and meaning to your and your loved one’s day!

Research shows that people with a form of dementia who include activity in their lives have better moods, better sleep, and less restlessness!

Thursday afternoon from 2 - 3:30 PM

February 9th, June 8th, September 7 & December 7th

Come to one or all four. Each workshop is independent from the others.

Location: Volunteers of America • Lambert House • 2600 SE 170th Ave, Portland, OR 97236

For free respite care during the workshop, contact Lambert House at (503) 760-2075 two weeks in advance of each session.

To register contact Loriann at (503) 988-8210

The Savvy Caregiver

A six-session class for families caring for loved ones with Alzheimer’s or another dementia. The workshop was developed by the University of Minnesota and has been found to decrease caregiver stress and increase caregiver confidence.

Six consecutive Tuesdays – February 7th through March 14th, 2 – 4 p.m.

Location: Hollywood Senior Center: 1820 NE 40th Ave., Portland Oregon

For more information about the class or about funds to pay for your loved ones care while you are in class, call Loriann McNeil, Multnomah County Family Caregiver Support Program Coordinator, at (503) 988.8210

For registration call Hollywood Senior Center at (503) 288.8303

Multnomah County Aging, Disability and Veterans Services is not affiliated with VAPORHCS and VAPORHCS does not endorse or recommend any of the above offerings. Use of any of these services is at your own risk
Do You Have a Family Member or Friend Who is a Veteran or Military Service Member Living with Mental Illness?

NAMI Homefront is a free, six-session class for family, friends and significant others of Veterans and Military Service Members with mental health conditions. Topics include . . .

- PTSD, Bipolar Disorder, Depression, Anxiety, Schizophrenia and more . . .
- Basics of Brain Biology & Medications
- Dealing with Crisis & Relapse
- Navigating the VA Medical System & DOD
- Communication & Empathy Skills
- Self-Care, Fighting Stigma and Advocacy

The course helps family members understand and support their loved one while maintaining their own well-being. The trained teachers of this course are also family members who have experience with military culture and know what it is like to have a loved one living with mental illness. It focuses on the unique needs of military and veteran communities.

February 8 through March 15
Wednesday 6:30 – 9 pm
All classes and materials are free!
CLASS WILL BE HELD at the Portland VA Medical Center
Register by calling NAMI Multnomah at (503) 228-5692